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A PROPOSED NEW SCHOOL FORMAT, CONTINUOUS PROGRESS CENTERS.

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SEATTLE, WASHINGTON, HAS MADE EFFORTS TO IMPROVE RACIAL BALANCE IN THE SCHOOLS BY INSTITUTING VOLUNTARY, MANDATORY, AND REVERSE TRANSFER PROGRAMS, IN WHICH 1500 NEGRO AND 90 WHITE STUDENTS HAVE ALREADY PARTICIPATED. MOREOVER IN ANTICIPATION OF INCREASED INMIGRATION, THE CITY HAS DEVELOPED A NEW TYPE OF SCHOOL STRUCTURE FOR URBAN LIVING, THE CONTINUOUS PROGRESS CONCEPT, A REORGANIZATION OF THE SCHOOLS WHICH COUNTERACTS THE RACIAL, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL ISOLATION OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL. AS PART OF THE CONCEPT PRIMARY SCHOOL WILL SERVE CHILDREN FROM PRESCHOOL THROUGH GRADE FOUR, AFTER WHICH STUDENTS WILL MOVE ON TO AN INTERMEDIATE CONTINUOUS PROGRESS CENTER WHICH WILL SERVE A LARGER COMMUNITY. TOTAL ENROLLMENT IN THIS CENTER WILL BE FROM 1,800 TO 3,000 BUT CHILDREN WILL BELONG TO INDIVIDUAL SCHOOLS. STUDENTS WILL BENEFIT FROM SPECIAL RESOURCES AND FACILITIES AND FROM THE VARIED SOCIAL MILIEU POSSIBLE IN A LARGE CENTER. FROM AGES 13 TO 17 STUDENTS WILL ATTEND SECONDARY CONTINUOUS PROGRESS CENTERS WHICH OFFER DIVERSITY, SPECIALIZATION, AND INSTRUCTIONAL INNOVATIONS, AS WELL AS SOME OCCUPATIONAL PREPARATION. FROM THESE UNITS PUPILS WILL MOVE ON TO COSMOPOLITAN COMMUNITY COLLEGES. SELF-PACING WILL ENABLE STUDENTS TO PROGRESS THROUGH THE SCHOOLS AT THEIR OWN RATE. HOWEVER THE SPECIAL VOTING PROCEDURES FOR EDUCATIONAL FINANCING IN THE STATE AND SOME MINORITY OPPOSITION COMPLICATE THE FRUITION OF THIS CONCEPT. THIS PAPER WAS PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY IN AMERICA'S CITIES, SPONSORED BY THE U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS, WASHINGTON, D.C., NOVEMBER 16-18, 1967. (NH)

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A PROPOSED NEW SCHOOL FORMAT, CONTINUOUS-PROGRESS CENTERS

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for the
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in America's Cities
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The city is Seattle. Once a quiet metropolis in a far corner of the country, Seattle recently has had bestowed upon it (by no less an authority than the New York Times) the doubtful distinction of being the nucleus of a great and growing megalopolis. It is the youngest, and some say the fastest growing metropolitan area in the country.

Tens of thousands of people are moving to the Seattle metropolitan area. The engineers, the managers, and the skilled workers settle largely to the comfortable suburbs. The less advantaged people, the poor and unskilled, come for the most part to the city. Although the city is coming of age culturally, its great universities, symphony

orchestra, and burgeoning artistic activities are accompanied by crowded freeways, inadequate mass transportation, and ghetto conditions.

About ten percent of Seattle's citizens are Negro, and the percentage is growing. An open-housing referendum recently was voted down, and Seattle may have been close to having a riot several times last summer.

That there was no riot, was perhaps partially due to bold steps planned by the school district and the city government, to bring disadvantaged and minority people into the mainstream of life.

It is widely believed in Seattle that there is still time to take preventive action. School people firmly believe this, and are striving to make necessary changes to insure educations' relevance to the conditions of urban living.

Seattle Public Schools already are trying to cope with <u>de facto</u> school segregation. For a number of years in-service courses have been provided to help teachers understand the life-style and special problems of poor children.

There is a <u>voluntary transfer program</u> which provides that any student may transfer from one school to another if in doing so he improves the racial balance at <u>both the sending and the receiving school</u>. Thus, Negro students may leave an inner-city school and white students may come to the inner-city. Currently there are approximately 1,125 Negro and other minority students participating in this program.

A mandatory transfer program designed to relieve crowded inner-city schools by bussing boys and girls to less crowded schools on the periphery has been in operation for three years, and under this program 375 Negro children are attending formerly all-white schools on the periphery.

A reverse transfer program (a phase of the voluntary transfer program mentioned above) encourages Caucasian students who seek an interracial school experience to attend school in the inner-city. At present there are 90 Caucasian students in this program.

Altogether then, there are this year 1,500 Negro students (ten percent of the total Negro enrollment) and 90 Caucasian students participating in programs designed to improve schools' racial balance.

Those who watch the racial situation in Seattle closely have been pleased at the reception accorded Negro students who transferred to formerly all-white schools in peripheral areas of the city. Much credit can be given to the support of the PTA, Council of Churches, and such inner-city groups as CAMP (Central Area Motivation Program). In addition to this, there is an apparent lessening of suspicion and fear on the part of parents in receiving schools, and there has been no noticeable flight to the suburbs to escape integration.

In addition to a substantial Title I program of compensatory education and additional district-supported efforts, the schools have sought to develop alternatives to the traditional school program such

as, work-study programs, Neighborhood Youth Corps, Project Interchange, or the Re-Entry Program designed to keep droupouts from losing touch.

THE CONTINUOUS PROGRESS CONCEPT

While all of the projects outlined above are heart-warming and gratifyingly successful, one cannot seriously believe that of themselves they will solve the problems of racial isolation in Seattle. The percentage of nonwhite persons in the population is growing steadily; there is no indication that the stream of migrants will cease for many years. The thoughtful observer turns ambivalent: optimistic that experimental programs work so well; cynical about the long-range prospect because, despite such efforts the situation in the inner-city and in other pockets of poverty clearly is worsening from year to year.

Against the background outlined above, Seattle schools have developed and are already implementing a dramatic new format for instruction which in the next few years may challenge the relevancy of virtually every unit of curriculum and every instructional strategy in the elementary and secondary schools. The purpose is to devise a school program that will best fit urban living as it will be within the lifetime of the boys and girls now in school. If the growth of the megalopolis is inevitable, as it appears to be, then a new type of school based on the most relevant curriculum content, and using the most suitable instructional strategies must be developed now. This is what Seattle's Continuous Progress Concept is designed to do.

In a generic sense the word "education" means to "lead forth." The Continuous Progress concept aims to lead individual children forth into the intellectual realm, and into the realm of urban reality. The concept can be implemented in a limited way in traditional neighborhood schools, but its complete realization demands a different organizational plan. By the turn of the century, only thirty-three years from now, eighty percent of all of Americans will be urbanites. They will face a new sort of urban reality. Judging by such present conditions as clogged arteries of transportation, unsafe streets, and racial isolation and conflict, one can predict that it will be no easy matter to find peace or harmony or personal fulfillment whether one resides in the city center or in the suburbs.

Since cities first were established they have been centers of trade and culture, religion and art, science and invention, and they always have drawn country people to them. What must be devised is a new approach to public education based on the concept of "cosmopolitan man" -- the individual who knows and appreciates the great city and feels at home in it. Such an educational scheme will make use of the variety, diversity, complexity, and challenge of the city as a classroom in which lessons of cosmopolitan living can be learned.

Today's city school draws its pattern, its form, and much of its curriculum from a rural America of decades past; it is not well designed to do this job. The city is vast and diverse. If a child is

to learn not to fear it but to participate in its stimulating life, he must be led forth in easy stages from the restricted geographical, cultural, social, and aspirational environment of his home neighborhood to a broader understanding and familiarity with the cosmopolitan scene. As a consequence, he can learn to navigate the complex urban society successfully.

At the same time the distinct value of each individual must be preserved. Even while the child learns to become an active participant in the life of his city, his schooling must also help him to find identity and fulfillment there.

Since present schools, serving as they do their small neighborhoods, tend to reinforce racial, social, and cultural isolation, an alternative is proposed which replaces the neighborhood school with a more appropriate institution.

Seattle now is considering the reorganization of the schools into Continuous Progress Centers.*

PRIMARY CONTINUOUS PROGRESS SCHOOLS -- Children up to about age nine will attend neighborhood primary schools, organized on the continuous progress format to serve the children normally found in Headstart, pre-kindergarten, kindergarten and grades one through four.

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* For some definitions of the technical aspects of the center, see Appendix A, attached to this paper.

Intermediate Continuous Progress Center -- Children approximately nine to thirteen will attend community intermediate continuous progress centers each serving a wider community than the primary school. The total enrollment of such a center would be 1,800 to 3,000, but within the center each child will belong to an individual school, and will have close identity with a homeroom teacher and with a small group of fellow students. At the same time the size of the center -- drawing students from a wide area -- will provide two advantages: (1) Improved use of staff, facilities, materials, technologies, with significantly wider experiences for learners, and (2) A social milieu which offers each boy or girl a chance to know and understand children of his own age from a wide spectrum of racial, economic, and social backgrounds.

Secondary Continuous Progress Center -- Children aged thirteen to seventeen will attend metropolitan secondary continuous progress centers, each school serving 5,000 or 6,000 students and offering in a larger way the advantages in the intermediate center. Five such secondary centers will serve the entire city. In addition to the advantages of diversity and specialization and the improved availability of the newest material and teaching technologies, these great secondary schools could offer a strong occupational program. The faculty and the student body will be drawn from varied racial, economic, and social backgrounds; the school would reflect the racial, social and economic variety of the city. The secondary center will be followed by the cosmopolitan community college.

Barriers such as those which now exist between elementary and high school would not be present to block the movement of appropriate students between the neighborhood primary school, the intermediate center, secondary center, and the community college; the limits would be nominal rather than actual. Many students, each working at his own pace, would cross from one institution to the next at an earlier or later age than suggested here. The movement would be consistent with the notion of self-pacing and continuous progress.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN

More than two years ago the Seattle School Board asked Superintendent Forbes Bottomly to examine the Seattle schools carefully and offer suggestions for their improvement. The Superintendent then appointed an Instructional Development Council composed of educators at all levels and responsible to the Superintendent himself, to guide and direct the innovative effort. The Continuous Progress Concept which has emerged is a synthesis of ideas from many sources, and since many elements of the plan are already developed in certain Seattle schools, these new proposals are based on practical experience with the dynamics of change. Feeling that such a dramatic proposal deserves extensive public debate, the Seattle School Board appointed a Citizens' Committee of 100 persons to study the plan carefully for a year and make recommendations.

While the Citizens' Committee was studying these plans, several related events took place. In November, 1966, the voters approved a bond issue for capital outlay which, as an alternative, provided funds for the building of the first intermediate center in case the Citizens' Committee endorsed the idea. There was and still is consistent opposition from a group called SONS (Save Our Neighborhood Schools) which vigorously opposes the "center" idea (and has both Negro and Caucasian members).

The "center" plan became an issue in recent School Board Elections, but candidates who opposed "centers" fared poorly, and the outcome was considered by many as an endorsement for the "center" idea. Even with these signs of support the Seattle School Board will no doubt proceed cautiously, not wanting to risk losing annual special-tax-levy elections. Unique laws governing special-levy elections in the state of Washington require a sixty percent favorable vote for passage, and no levy election is valid unless there is a total vote on the issue equal to or exceeding forty percent of the turnout in the last previous general election. To further complicate the matter, special levies can be voted for only one year at a time. Thus to support today's schools, the Districts must successfully pass a special levy every year. In recent years Seattle has lost and resubmitted five times. Since more than twenty percent of the budget depends upon successful passage of the levy, small groups that oppose Board action are tempted to "blackmail" the School Board simply by threatening to stay home on

election day. The Board is expected to make up its mind about building the first intermediate center sometime in January, 1968.

The report of the Citizens' Committee is completed. Both the minority and the majority have endorsed the concept of continuous progress as a pattern to be followed in all Seattle schools. The majority also has endorsed the building of the first intermediate continuous-progress center. The minority, although approving of the concept, stands firmly for continuation of the neighborhood school.

Meanwhile the planning and development go on. A special task force has outlined a plan for converting to continuous progress. Task groups are now involving school faculties in discussions and planning. Appropriate in-service courses are under way, and many separate elements of the continuous progress format such as, nongrading, independent study, flexible scheduling, team-teaching, and the development of learning resource centers are being tested by local faculties in nearly one-third of the schoools.

CONCLUSION

As the public debate continues there is clearly a swing toward the continuous progress concept and growing acceptance of the idea of large centers (instead of neighborhood schools) which can provide powerful, relevant, urban education, and at the same time largely eliminate racial segregation above age eight. There is excitement in the air, not only in the city, but to a certain extent in the suburbs as well, and this

is heartening because a problem as difficult as racial segregation cannot in the long run be completely solved <u>inside</u> the city limits. Experience in older cities indicates that without the participation of the suburbs in school desegregation, the city schools can ultimately be expected to become overwhelmingly Negro. This is another phase of the problem. The significant consideration now is that Seattle has a powerful plan based on an ideal; in terms of the calendar of urbanization, Seattle has time to bring its plan to realization.

APPENDIX A

Continuous Program Center: Some Definitions

Definition of Continuous Progress. The instructional format known as continuous progress provides for each student a unique set of learning experiences designed and constantly re-designed to promote optimum progress at his own pace.

Flexibility is the Key to Continuous Progress. The utilization of time, facilities, talents, and space, and the employment of techniques of learning will remain flexible. Formats of instruction will be developed which bend and yield to meet the interests, abilities, and needs of individual students.

Some specific characteristics of a "Continuous Progress" School:

Curriculum -- The content that is taught will be based upon the recognized and relevant "structure of knowledge" in each discipline as determined, not by tradition but by a careful and critical examination by experts in each field.

Psychology of Learning -- Instructional strategies will be based on the theories of such investigators as Bruner, Ilg, and Bloom about how children learn. The process will include inquiry as a strategy wherever possible in every subject.

Technology -- The newest technologies, materials, books, and equipment will be used, and such techniques as games and simulations will be common.

Instructional Format -- In order to prescribe for each student an optimum program designed to serve his unique needs, the format will be nongraded and flexible. In order to use most effectively the varied skills of teachers, teachers will work together as teams; planning, teaching, and evaluating in collegial groups.

Basic Skills -- Great attention will be given to learning and retaining essential communicative and computational skills.

Subject Matter -- Subject matter will be organized on the basis of concepts to be mastered. A student will be judged to have completed a course when he has mastered an optimum number of concepts; rather than when he has successfully completed twenty weeks in class.

Self-Pacing -- A student will progress as rapidly from one concept to another in each course as his individual achievement rate will permit.

Challenge -- When the student fails to progress either because the challenge is too great or too little, a new path will be found for him immediately.

There may be as many routes to graduation as there are students in the school. Advanced placement within the school will be granted on the basis of proven achievement.

Non-Graded Format -- Classes will be separated from one another on the basis of levels of achievement rather than on age classifications.

Independent Study -- As he learns self-direction, the student will be freed somewhat from the requirement of attending all classes. Older students might ideally spend up to one-third of their time pursuing independent studies.

Team-teaching -- Where feasible, the teachers will work in teams so that each can specialize in the task he knows best. Teams will work together to plan and evaluate instructional strategies.

Class Size -- Where small class size is not essential, classes will be much larger. Where small size is essential, classes will be smaller.

Lay Assistants -- There will be wide use of para-professional persons to do routine tasks, freeing teachers to plan and carry out the instructional tasks for which they have prepared.

The Principalship -- The function inherent in the word, "principalship," will be shared by the principal with instructional experts on his staff in exercising leadership in instructional improvement.

Involvement -- A new dimension in teaching will require extensive participation among colleagues in planning and carrying out instructional programs, and in arriving at decisions which are based on the collective wisdom of a team or a staff.

Rigid patterns must give way to flexible and continually-evolving patterns which will be designed, and constantly redesigned, to enhance the learning climate by providing a continuous challenge for each individual student.